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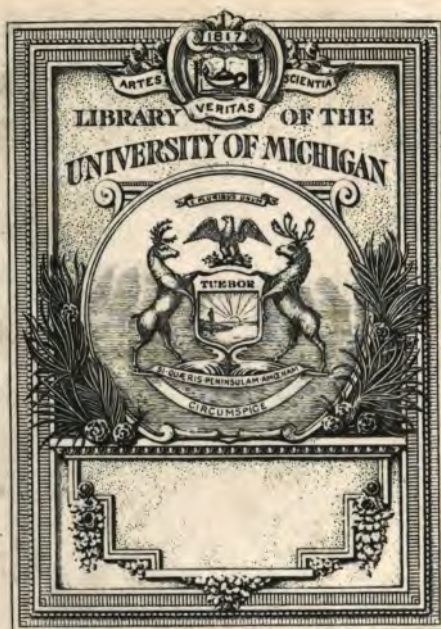
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A
LETTER
FROM
A Minister in the Country,
To a MEMBER
OF THE
CONVOCATION.

LETTER

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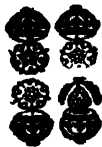
TO A MEMBER

OF THE

CONVOCATION.

A
LETTER
FROM
A Minister in the Country,
To a MEMBER
OF THE
CONVOCAATION.

Licensed and Entred according to Order.



L O N D O N :

Printed for *Richard Baldwin*, near the *Black Bull*
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A LETTER

FROM

A Minister in the Country,
to a Member of the Convocation.

S I R,

I Look'd upon it as a good Omen, when the first Proctor that I heard of chosen to serve in the Convocation, was you, of whose Prudence, Temper, and Judgment I have had long Experience. The sense of which so far transported me, that had you not invited it, I should hardly have forborn to give you my thoughts about the Matters which I hear are likely to be offered to your Consideration in that Venerable Assembly.

Matters certainly of great Importance to our Church, a Church which I am certain of, in respect of its Doctrine, Worship, and Order, is inferiour to none upon the face of the Earth. And therefore what we ought with all imaginable

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ble care at all times to preserve, but in this present Juncture more especially to respect.

For if what Report, and some Letters, and the *Queries* suggest be true, we have reason to fear, there is a Cloud hanging over us in the Commission lately set up, that portends no less than Ruin to our Constitution; by taking away the two main Supports of it, our Liturgy and Episcopacy.

A matter, if true, you cannot be too intent upon, nor too resolute to oppose; and if such things be complied with by you, and those of your station, you must be false to the Trust reposed in you, and to the Church of which you are Members, Ministers, and at this present Representatives.

But I must confess to you, I begin to think that we have been impos'd upon by the Artifice of some, and the Credulity of others; for having met with a Book, called, *A Discourse concerning the Ecclesiastical Commission*, and convers'd of late with several discerning and impartial Persons, that have penetrated into this matter further than some of us, I find that there is little else intended than what you and I, and several of our Acquaintance have thought would be rather for the Advantage, Security, and Honour of our Church, than to the Prejudice and Detriment of it.

And if the refreshing of these things, and laying them in some Order before you, will be of any use to you (as you pretend) I shall (as the time

time will permit) do my best to answer your desires; and in discoursing upon which,

1. I shall shew, that there are such things in our Church, as are in their nature alterable; and what they are.

2. That there are such things in our Church which may be altered, and the Church not the worse for such alterations.

3. There are such things as may be altered, and the Church be the better for such alterations.

4. That this is a proper season for such alterations.

1. That there are such things in the Church as are in their nature alterable; and may upon just Occasion be altered, has been the constant Opinion of our Church; And which for the Authority of it, and the Excellency of its Reasoning, I shall choose to set down in its own words. *It has been the wisdom of the Church of England, ever since the first compiling of her Publick Liturgy, to keep the Mean between the two Extreame, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it. For, as on the one side common Experience sheweth, that where a change has been made of things advisedly established (no evident Necessity so requiring) sundry inconveniences have thereupon ensued; and those many times more, and greater than the evils that were intended to be remedied by such change. So on the other*

Preface
to the Service-Book.

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side,

side, particular Forms of Divine Worship, and the Rites and Ceremonies appointed to be used therein, being things in their own nature Indifferent and Alterable, and so acknowledged, it is but reasonable, that upon weighty and important Considerations, according to the various exigency of Times and Occasions, such changes and alterations should be made therein, as to those that are in place of Authority, should from time to time, seem either necessary or expedient. So the Homily of Fasting, Part I. Article 34, &c.

So that setting aside (what in this case is to be supposed not concerned in the present Debate) the Essentials belonging to our Religion, and our Church (without the former of which it would not be a true or compleat Church, and without the latter it would not be our Church) there is nothing but what as it's alterable, so may in such Circumstances be altered.

2. There are such things in our Church as may be altered, and the Church not be the worse for such alterations. Which Rule supposes the Alterations such as are consistent with the Being and Security of our Church. *With the Being*, whereby are excluded all such as will not allow a National Church, Episcopacy, and a Liturgy. *With the Security*, and so are excluded such alterations as will do more mischief by dividing us among our selves, than good by uniting others to us. And such alterations I conceive would be the new modelling of the Liturgy, and the forbidding wholly the use of the established Rites and Ceremonies

monies. If the matters proposed for Alteration be of the former sort, there can be no Accommodation; if of the latter, the time and season are to be respected, as well as the things themselves: which will also be debated in the close.

Setting aside the Objections against the Essentials of our Church, as not to our present purpose: the rest may be comprehended in this order:

The Kalendar, The Service, The Rites, Reordination, Subscription and Declaration, Government and Discipline.

1. The Kalendar. And herein the first thing that is to be considered is the *Apocrypha*, the Books of which being only of Humane Composure, have not only been all along objected against by Dissenters, but also wished by many amongst ourselves might be exchanged for Lessons out of the Canonical Scripture, as by the Bishops, and other Episcopal Divines, assembled to consider of these matters in 1641. It's acknowledged that some of these Books contain matter of excellent use, and have been anciently read in the Christian Church. But the first of these is no Reason for those Books which contain things neither profitable nor true: nor can it be of any force, when there are Chapters of Canonical Scripture, that may with great profit be read, and are omitted for their sake.

(1.) If any of them were anciently read. So were *Hermes Pastor*, and *Clemens Romanus*. And if that is a reason why the one, it's a reason why what we have of the other should be read also.

(2.) If

(2) If they were read then, we know what mischief ensued from it, when there were some of the Ancients thought too favourable of some of them: And the Church of *Rome* has of Apocrypha made them Canonical: To whom our reading of them may be thought to give too much countenance.

The Pro-
testant
Peacema-
ker, p. 120.
1682.

To this I may add the revising of the Psalter added to our Liturgy; which though in its time, and before a better could be had, was of singular use, yet seems now not so defensible, when there is a *more correct* in our hands. A *more correct* I call it, after the Bishop of *Cork*, since those that will take the pains to compare this with the original, cannot but be sensible of the manifold variations of it from the *Hebrew*, some while adding Phrases and Verses; another while leaving out, and frequently mistaking the sense of it; And as learned men observe this, so vulgar Readers may sometimes find the inconsistency of one *Translation* with the other, which must needs create no little scruple in their minds by having inconsistent, as well as confusion by having different Translations. And whereas it's pleaded the people are used to this, and some so as to have it by heart, I answer, the people are used at home, and by the Quotations from it in Sermons and Books, and Paraphrases upon it in Print, to the other. And if we compute how few come to daily Prayers to those that do not, and how few of those that do come can repeat the Psalms *memoriter* to those that cannot, the number that may be presum'd will

will be for the old, will be inconsiderable to those that will be for the new. Besides, if this were true, its an argument only for the present age, and not for the next. And which if it had been of any force, there could never reasonably have been any second Translation of the Bible after a first; for what they had they were more used to than what they had not. These are things the aforesaid excellent Bishop thinks will easily be granted, p. 120.

2. As for the *Service* I shall consider it in another place; and shall therefore now pass to the

3. Rites and Ceremonies. Here I take it for granted.

1. That the Ceremonies that we are obliged to observe are no other than what are *prescribed* in the Book of Common-Prayer; and so Bowing at the Name of Jesus, and toward the Altar, being not therein *prescribed*, are not concerned in the case before us.

2. I take it for granted that the Ring in Marriage is now on all sides accounted a meer Civil and not a Religious Rite; and so what remain, are only the Surplice, the Cross, and Kneeling at the Sacrament.

3. I take it for granted again, that if the circumstances of times and state of the Church make it more necessary to lay any of them aside, or alter them, than to continue the use of them, that it's then lawful and reasonable according to the Doctrine of our Church, to alter or abolish them: And that though they have been never so venerable for Antiquity; since even those

those that were once of Divine Institution, and of Apostolical use have been changed or prohibited when the case was altered, or need so required; as it was in the posture at the Passover among the Jews, the time of Celebrating the Lord's Supper, the Holy Kiss, and Love-Feasts in the Primitive Church.

But how indifferent soever the things are in themselves, and that the nature of the thing varies not, nor is bettered by the use, or made worse by the alteration or forbearance of them; yet I confess there is a difficulty in our circumstances how to proceed. For without quitting or altering, it seems the Dissenting party is not to be brought into the Church; and without retaining them, it's likely many of our own will hardly be kept in it. Both parties are in the Extremes, and yet both are to be regarded; the one, that there be no Schism from the Church; the other that there be no Schism in it. And therefore to accommodate this matter, some have thought it most convenient to leave the case wholly indifferent, to wear or not wear a Surplice, to use or not use the Cross, to kneel, stand, or sit in the Lord's Supper; but I am afraid instead of uniting this would more divide us, and set Clergy against Clergy, and People against People, and sometimes People against Clergy. And therefore in my poor opinion, the best expedient is first of all to have some Rubricks drawn up to set forth for what reason the Church doth use and retain them, (without the *Tokens* and *Dedications* heretofore allu-
ded

ded to.) And then to find out some way for a mitigation. As for instance, if the Minister to be admitted, yet scruples the use of the Surplice or Cross, upon application to the Bishop, another may be appointed to do that Service. And if one of the Laity scruples the use of the Cross, the Minister may be permitted in that case to Baptize without it: Or if Kneeling at the Sacrament, that the person so scrupling may have it delivered unto him in another posture, provided it be not at the Table; but in some convenient Pew or Place appointed by the Minister. And the same course may be taken for Godfathers, which if the Parent signifies he cannot procure, or is not satisfied in, it shall be lawful for the Minister to accept of the Sponson of the Parent.

4. *Reordination.* This is the case of those that are not now against Episcopal Orders, but having been Ordained by Presbyters, they think it unlawful to renounce them; and to be Reordained, where they have been already Ordained.

And they plead for themselves;

That though by the late Act of Parliament none are to be admitted to officiate in the Church of *England* without Episcopal Ordination, yet it was not so before.

For, 1. the Ordination by Presbyters was by our Church accounted valid, though not every way perfect, and Foreigners were suffered to enjoy Ecclesiastical Preferments here without Reordination, as was the case of *Peter du Montin*, &c.

2. It was not only so with Foreigners, but also those that were made Presbyters by Presbyters in

~~Scotland, were made Bishops, without any New Ordination.~~

3. They plead though their case is somewhat different, yet it's so near the same, that the difference cannot (as far as they conceive) make that altogether invalid in them, which was so far valid in the other, as not to require a New Ordination.

4. They plead *Quod fieri non debet factum valet*; and that were it to do again they would not chuse it, but being done, and sometimes when they could not have Episcopal Ordination, they think some favour is to be allowed for this once. My business is not to enquire into the sufficiency of their Reasons, but what may be done for the composing now of this matter, and the preserving of the Right of Episcopal Ordination (which St. Hierom. himself makes the sole Prerogative and distinguishing Character of that Order) and the quieting of the Consciences of those that are herein concerned. Now there are three methods may be taken; either That observed by Archbishop Bramhall, or a Form hypothetically drawn up, or that of the Bill of Union. I cannot think that of the Primate has escap'd you, but yet because I have the Book before me, I shall transcribe it: *Non annihilantes priores ordines (si quos habuit) nec validitatem aut invaliditatem eorundem determinantes, multo minus Ordines Sacros Ecclesiarum Forinsecarum condemnantes, quos proprio Judici relinquimus: Sed solummodo supplentes quicquid prius defuit per Canones Ecclesie Anglicane requisitum, & providentes paci Ecclesie, ut Schisma tollatur occasio: Et Conscientiis Fidelium satisfi-*
ar,

Epist. ad
Evagr.

His Life
prefixed
to his
Works.

(C. 11)

*at, nec ulla modo dubitent de eius Ordinatione, aut
actus suos Presbyteriales tanquam invalidos aber-
sentur. In cuius rei testimonium, &c.*

We may here observe how cautiously this great
Man proceeded betwixt ratifying and annulling
their Orders, that he might not give or take a-
way too much. And withal how far he thought
it necessary to go for the peace of the Church,
and the taking away the occasion of Schism.

The other method is hypothetical, after the
same way that's used in Baptizing such of whose
Baptism we have no proof, viz. *If thou art not
already Ordained, I Ordain thee, &c.*

The only Objection I can foresee at present,
against this is, that the other is matter of Fact
that is in question, but here it's matter of Right.

But to that I answer, that is not to the point;
for both Cases are hypothetically put, and so the
Right is no more determined by the one, than
the Fact is by the other. And *if thou art not alrea-
dy Baptized, &c.* doth not declare any thing a-
bout the Fact, then, *If thou art not already Or-
dained, &c.* doth not declare any thing about
matter of Right, but both are left in suspense;
and so *If thou art not already, &c.* is no more
than the Bishop's *nec validitatem aut invalidita-
tem determinantes.*

The 3^d is that of the *Bill of Union* (as I have
heard) which is that the person to be qualified,
shall be by imposition of the Bishops hands, re-
ceiv'd with a certain form of words, to signifie his
admission into the Church of *England*, as a Mi-
nister therein.

See King
Charles I.
Declaration
for the
Ratificati-
on of the
Articles.

Against
Faber, p.
51. B. 2.

Schism
Guarded,
§ 1. C. 11,
&c.

Answer to
Charity
Maintain-
ed.

5. Declarations and Subscriptions. The former respects the Service-Book, the latter the Articles. As all publick Forms should be so compos'd as to take in as many into its Communion, as is consistent with the Constitution and self-preservation: So ought all Declarations and Subscriptions to answer the same end, and to be drawn up in such words as may be for the peace and establishment of the Church, the ease of those that are to Officiate in it, and the preservation of a good understanding among them. And I perswade my self it would have been more for the good of the Church, if what is now generally understood by the Declaration and Subscription were more plainly express; viz. that the former is to the *Use*, and the latter to the Articles, as Articles of *Peace* and *Concord*. This is the sense of Archbishop *Laud*, if I understand him, but without doubt is that of Archbishop *Bramhall*, and Mr. *Chillingworth*; and it is not to be doubted, but that to make the whole the more easie, it is fit either that the Articles should be brought to the Subscription, or the Subscription to the Articles.

For those great men at the same time as they held that *the constant Doctrine of the Church of England is so pure and Orthodox, that there is no Error in it, which may necessitate or warrant any man to disturb the Peace, or renounce the Communion;* they do intimate (by the qualified sense they give of them, as Articles of *Peace*, and the Negative sense they allow a Subscription in, so as *not to contradict them*;) that there may be some Doctrines held by the Church which good and honest men may

may have some scruple about; or not be satisfied in. And it may be supposed again, that a good and honest man may question whether such a Subscription be the Subscription which the Church did intend, or is satisfied with; and therefore though he could subscribe in their sense, may think it unlawful to subscribe. To apply this to the case of the present Conformity, suppose we, not a Dissenter, but a young Student, qualified by a competent stock of Humane Learning and knowledge in Divinity, thinks of entering into Holy Orders, and as a prudent and good Man first of all considers what he is to do. The first thing he meets with is, that he must declare his *unfeigned assent and consent* to the use of *all and every thing contained, and prescribed in and by the Book of Common-Prayer*, and amongst which he finds the *Apocrypha* is to be read. Now upon reading perhaps Dr. Reynolds, or Bishop Cofins, &c. upon that Argument, as he is convinced of what our Church holds, that those Books are not of Divine Authority; so also for that reason, that some of them contain things which our Writers prove to be manifestly false. Upon this he Queries, whether he may lawfully read That in the Church as a Lesson for the People's Instruction, which he is convinced is false? From thence he proceeds to the *Psalms*, and as he knows there are two Translations in use, so he thinks himself bound to compare them, and upon Comparison finds these in some things inconsistent, and one time the one to deny what the other affirms. Now since but one
of

of these can be true, he questions whether when he is to use both, he may make the Text contradict itself, and in the *Desk* read with the Old, *They were not obedient unto his word*; in the *Pulpit*, or with the *Hebrew* and the New, read *They rebelled not against his word*, *Psal. 105. 28.*

He proceeds further, and comes to the Creeds, and because that of *Athanasius* is the larger, and so may be presumed should be the plainer, he begins to examine the Articles of it, and though he is abundantly satisfied in the Doctrine of the Sacred Trinity, and the Deity of the Son and Holy Ghost, yet he finds a great Dispute betwixt the Greek and Latin Church about the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son. Now the first Question is, whether of these two Churches is in the right? And secondly, whether this be a Fundamental Article of the Faith, *which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved?* And the third Question is, whether he may declare the Greek Church in a state of Damnation for what is questionable, whether it be a Fundamental Article, or not? And that it is questionable he finds, for this is not made necessary by *Athanasius* himself, nor was originally either in the *Nicene* (truly so called) or *Athanasian* Creed. Nor lastly, is it so thought by our Church, which, receiving the four first General Councils, consequently agrees with the third, that of *Ephesus*, which made a peremptory Decree against all Additions to be made hereafter to the Creed: From whence it follows that nothing else was then accounted necessary

*Athana.
Epist. ad
Serapim.
Tom. 1.*

*Council.
Ephes.
Part 2.
Art. 6.*

easy to be believed, but what was contained in the *Nicene*.

And now this young man's Doubt is further advanced, because this is a *Creed*, and to be subscribed to, and so seems still less capable of the sense before given of Subscription, as a matter of Peace only.

Now how our *Opposit* about the *Commis*, did in these matters I know not; but I suppose there are others that found it *difficult* to conform, because they found it difficult to satisfy themselves in these and the like things.

And therefore it's convenient that the Powers of Subscription and Declaration be explained. And it would be worth your while perhaps to consider also, whether it will not be requisite to have a Rubrick drawn up, and inserted before the *Athanasian Creed*, signifying, That *the Creed may be read*, or with an *Alias*, *This is the Nicene*; or that the Condemning Sentences be left out, or if continued, it may be express'd, that they are to be applied only to those that obstinately deny the Fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith contained in that *Creed*.

The want of which doth give occasion of scruple to many of our own People, that will not say *Amen* to it, as well as to the Dissenters, and trouble to several of the Order that subscribe it.

5. I should now proceed to the Government of the Church, in which the chief thing desired by the Dissenters is, that the Presbytery might be restored to its ancient Privilege; and that the Bishops would consult them, and permit them to share in

all

all acts belonging to their station, which it's likely would be a great ease to, and also be for the honour of the Bishop. It would make him more beloved by his Clergy, and take off from him what-ever he may suffer, when he is alone, by any mis-government. He would then be as a *Cyprian* revered by all, when he doth as he, that did nothing without their assistance and concurrence.

Epist. 6.

6. The last thing complained of, is the want of due Discipline, and especially in the superficial issuing forth of Excommunications. A matter indeed highly scandalous, and that is complain'd of by the Church as well as those that dissent from it. And is a Subject therefore worthy of mature consideration, and to that I leave it.

I have now done with the Case of Dissenters, and have shewed how there are Alterations may be made in the Church in favour of them, and the Church not be the worse for them.

Against which I know not what can be reasonably objected; but that either what can be hoped for from them, though the Church should be disposed to make such Concessions, Relaxations, and Alterations: where are they that will come in? Or if they are so disposed, and should embrace these Overtures, what advantage will this be to the Church? To the first I Answer,

1. It's but trying upon such terms as the Church will not be the worse for; and if it succeed not, the fault will be theirs, and not ours. We shall thereby stifle their Clamours against the Church, and

and shall shew our selves to be persons of Candour and Charity, and I may add Justice and Integrity. When the Church having it now in their power do perform what they so lately promised by their Bishops when it was not in their power, viz. That they wanted no due Tenderneſs towards Dissenters, but were willing to come to such a Temper as should be thought fit, when that matter should be considered and settled in Parliament and Convocation. We know not how far such steps may prevail upon the most dissatisfied, but we may be certain of their due effect upon those that are sincere and impartial.

But it may be said, what need is there of such, or what benefit will it be to the Church to admit those, who when kept out, are Enemies, and when let in, will be no Friends?

To this I answer in the words of the Venerable Prelate before quoted, *These men, in behalf of whom I have spoken, are in being already, and will Preach restant somewhere or other; and 'tis better we had them in peace-ma-publick than in corners, that so the Church either had* ^{ker. p. 127.} *Security for their peaceable Doctrine, (which I verily* ^{128.} *believe we may have as to most of them,) or opportunities to convict them of Sedition. What he saith further is worthy of perusal, and is sufficient to put the Querie out of Countenance, viz.*

But I have othergues Arguments that move me.

1. *To those who ask, What need of more Union? I return, What need of Holiness? What need of Godliness, Charity, Justice? Are these Christian Duties, and is not Union and Peace as much so?*

2. *I am and must be in the mind, that the strength of the Protestant Cause, both here at home, and through-*

out Christendom, lies in the Union of Protestants; and the Glory, Purity, and Power of Christianity in this World, stand or fall with Protestantism.

3. I must be so ingenuous as to acknowledge, That though the City and divers particular places, flourish with such Preachers as never they had before, yet the way of Preaching in many parts of the Country, and in some no obscure places too, might be much improved and needs supply. And it can never be made out to the World, but it were better we had too many good Preachers, than too few.

I could tell some men in their ear, They also have strangely multiplied Curacies, which are too often vacant. The Lord forgive them, and redress this great evil in his Church.

Having clear'd this Point, I shall proceed to shew
 3. General. 3. That there are such things in our Church and Constitution which may be altered, so that the Church shall be the better for such alterations. And this is a case would require our consideration, although there was not a Dissenter amongst us. And that may be, by taking away what may be spared, and that sometime is superfluous. By supplying what is wanting, by clearing what is doubtful, by amending what's amiss, and improving what is tolerable and well, so as to make it yet more beneficial and solemn.

(1.) By taking away what may be spared. And here it may well be queried, whether it's not better both for Minister and People, to have the Sunday Service shortned, than continued to that length that it has at present. For the People, who (whatever some Devout Persons may conceive, or howsoever they

they may be able to keep up their minds and temper) are apt to flag and have their Spirits tired and cloy'd by a tedious and prolix Service tho' ne're so devout; and if for the sake of the weaker, the Church has thought fit to break the Service into parts, and Collects, there is as much reason, why the whole should be so contrived as to fall in with the same end. But if we proceed to the case of the Minister, it will seem more necessary, upon whom the Duty lies too hard, if the whole is to be performed as the Rubrick requires, without any relaxation. The Service of the Church, as it's not to be contrived only for the more serious and devout, and those that have full leisure, but for the whole Body, as it's made up of Persons of different tempers, &c. so it's to be so ordered not as to fit the City-Clergy only, or those that are in better circumstances of helping themselves, but the whole: And we are to consult and provide as well for those that have no help, as those that have; for those that have great Cures, as well as those that have small; for the infirm and aged, as well as the healthy and young. Into whose place and circumstances you of the Convocation ought to put your selves, if they will judge aright, which if they did, I believe they will say of those that are of another mind, what Bishop *Sanderfon* said of his Brethren at the *Savoy*, upon the like occasion, That they *were taking a course to kill the inferiour Clergy*. If Persons were to try the harder as well as the easier condition, surely they would be more moderate and condescending. And if any are yet to be convinced, send them down to some Parishes we know, for a Month, to ease the poor Minister by reading Prayers, and Preaching at his

Church, then trudge a mile, two, or three on foot in ill weather and bad ways to serve a small Cure, then return to read Prayers at home ; and at Evening, after all his labour, sit down with Bread and Cheese, and small Beer, and see how he likes it : Or if he likes not this, let him go to some populous Market-Town, where the Burthen is great, and the Pay very small ; let him Read and Preach in the Morning, and the like again in the Afternoon ; or if not Preach, yet *Read Catechise, Christen and Bury the Dead, and Visit the Sick*, and come home ready to faint away with the Service, and be forced to get to a warm Bed for want of Cordial or Wine, and such refreshments. And after all, let him consider what it is to do this Month after Month, Year after Year, till the spirits of the poor man are quite exhausted, and he languishes away with a Consumption ; or is surprized through these heats and colds with a Fever, that eases him of his charge. And then come to your Convocation, and tell them whether the Service be too long or no.

Nay, I perswade my self these Gentlemen that are thus ready to impose burdens upon others, would then be of the first that complain. For this is quite another thing to what it is to walk from a warm house to a Cathedral, and for half an hour turn over a Service-Book, hear a Sermon, and return to a warm room, and good fare in the close of it. Let them that have Curates and Conveniencies do as they please, but for God's sake let not them that hardly know what it is to do all the Service of a Cure throughout the year, or perhaps their life, prescribe to those that weekly go through the Office of it.

But

But perhaps you will say, how is this to be done? I answer first, think sensibly of it, and you will soon find out a way. But however to prevent any excuse.

1. Reduce things to the former state they were in, and as they were originally several distinct Offices, so let them be used in their proper times and seasons. As for example, let the Communion-Service be for a Communion, and persons not obliged to read it but at that season *, or when there is no Sermon.

2. Why may not the Litany be shortened by concluding at the Lord's-Prayer, and leaving out what follows; which (bating the Responsals) seems not so agreeable to the Order of a *Litany*, and was composed also (as we may guess) peculiarly with respect to a state of Persecution. And so may be left to the discretion of the Minister to read or omit it.

* To the old Rubrick was *Collects, Epistles and Gospels, to be used at the Celebration of the Lord's Supper.*

3. That at least it be left to his discretion again in short days, and extremity of weather; one day to read one part, and another day another, and all in two days. For why may not that be permitted to be done in two days, which in some Cathedrals is divided into several hours of the same day. And for the same reason, especially where the people have their Cattel to fodder, &c. that it be permitted in the Afternoon to leave out the first Lesson, or the like; that so they may be allowed to do that, which otherwise sometimes they are forced to do: And that neither their own Consciences be hamper'd, nor they exposed to the rash Censures of some of their over-rigorous, and yet too often not over laborious Brethren.

It may be considered further whether in the
Weekly

Weekly Service in the Country Parishes, it's not to be left to the liberty and discretion of the Minister to use the Prayers without the Lessons, and especially the *Litany* alone on *Wednesdays* or *Fridays*; that so the people by not being kept too long from their Labours may be encouraged to come to the Prayers. It being far better to have Prayers alone than to have the doors shut up for want of two or three to make an Assembly.

If it be said this Liberty and Discretion do too often not meet together in the Curate.

I answer, it's great pity if it be so, but I should think he may be reasonably thought competently qualified to order these things that is trusted with the Souls of the People. If it be otherwise let the Bishop that Ordains, and Archdeacon that presents, and the Rector that provides the Curate, answer for it.

There are some things of the like nature left to discretion, as in the Voluntary Prayers, the *General Thanksgiving*, &c.

(2.) There may be an alteration to the better by supplying what is wanting in the Church-Service. And of this sort are (1) an Office for receiving Penitents after an Apostacy from our Religion; or in the case of publick and notorious Scandal. (2) An Office for receiving Persons absolved after solemn Excommunication, into our Communion. (3) An Office for the Prisons, consisting of Prayers to be used in them, and especially at Executions.

(3.) By amending what's fit to be amended. That I may not be mistaken in the Case: I do, 1. beforehand declare what Dr. Featly once said of the *Liturgie* before the last Review, to be my opinion,
That

That the Book of Common-Prayer (the Kalendar being *Differdipt* reformed in point of Apocryphal Saints and Chapters, *P. 16, &c.* &c.) is the most compleat, perfect and exact Liturgy in the Christian World, 2. That (as the Preface to the Liturgy saith of the former) it doth not contain any thing contrary to the Word of God, or to sound Doctrine, or which a Godly man may not with a good conscience use and submit to.; and I will add what he not only lawfully, but comfortably may joyn in. 3. (As it goes on) That it doth not contain any thing, which is not fairly defensible against any that shall oppose the same; if it shall be allowed such ~~just~~ and favourable construction, as in common equity ought to be allowed to all Humane Writings, &c. And when I have allowed this, I think it no ways inconsistent with what Mr. Thorne ^{A good way of} dike has said, viz The Form of Divine Service ^{now} ^{Composing} in force by Law, may be acknowledged capable of a ^{Differences} ^{at the end} ^{of Just} ^{Weights,} ^{Or p. 245.} ^{So the Bi-} ^{shop of} ^{Cork, pag.} ^{117.} amendment, without disparagement either to the wisdom of the Church that prescribed it, or of the Nation that Enacted it. For it may in the whole be the best in its kind, and what a godly man may use and submit, and contain nothing but what is so far fairly defensible. And yet if we come more nicely to enquire into it, it may have some things obscure and too doubtfully exprest, it may be in its Phraseology liable to misapplication, through change of words, times and affairs, it may be sometimes too fanciful; that is, it may in the whole be useful, and devout, and in all the parts of it tolerable and defensible, where yet it is not to be commended and applauded. I shall pass it over as easily as I can. To give a few Instances of each.

1. There

1. There are some things obscure, as in the Prayer for the Clergy, *Who alone werkest great Marvels, send down, &c.* So in the Collect for Trinity-Sunday, *Who has given us grace in the power of the divine Majesty, to worship the Unity.* In the proper Preface at the Communion for Trinity-Sunday, That which we believe of the glory of the Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy-Ghost, *without any difference or inequality.* In the Prayer before the Communion, *That our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood.* In the Office of Baptism—*By the Baptism of thy well-beloved Son, in the River Jordan, didst sanctify water.* In the Office of Matrimony, *With my Body I thee worship.* In that of Burial, *Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God to take to himself, &c.* which supposes Discipline; and therefore where Discipline is not exercis'd, it's hard to use it in all cases, without a further Explication. So are there sometimes in the Collects the like obscurity, as that of *Easter-Sunday*, where the Preface and the Petition (as it seems) want a better connexion. So also the first *Sunday* after *Easter*, &c. Sometimes again there are things very liable to misapplication, as the form of Absolution in the Office for Visiting the Sick, *By his authority committed to me, I absolve thee.* Of which the Church of Rome has made so great advantage, that it was the matter of a publick Dispute, since printed. To this may be added, the Answer in the Catechism, *The Body and Blood of Christ, which are Verily and Indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's-Supper.* Such again is that to weak Minds, which is in the Exhortation

tation for warning of the Communion, *Because it's requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet Conscience.* Such again, are those Collects which too much incline to the *Pelagian* Phrase of laying the force of temptation, and man's liableness to sin, upon the frailty and not the corruption of our Nature, as the first and 24th. Sundays after Trinity. Lastly, there are some of the Collects that are too fanciful, and savour of the Breviary, as those of *St. Luke, St. John, Simon and Jude.* Now after all, I do not say these or the like things are not tolerable, or defensible, but that they are not only capable of amendment, but in a fort do need it.

(4.) The Offices of the Church may be improved; and of this I shall give an instance or two.

1. In the Collects, which, though good, may be made, as I conceive, more useful for exciting the Devotion of the People, if (where it may conveniently be done) they be so formed, as to have a respect to the Epistle and Gospel then read. This I perceive was a design the Commissioners of the *Savoy* had in their eye; such were the third Sunday in *Advent*, and the sixth Sunday after *Epiphany.* It was great pity they had not time (as I suppose) to have gone through with the whole; for we may easily apprehend by what was then done, the difference, and advantage that might have been gained by it.

2. In the Office of Confirmation, which if it had notice given of it the Sunday before, by an Exhortation like unto that before the Sacrament; and a Discourse about the Nature, Use, and Obligation of

it, immediately before the Bishop Confirms, and a serious Exhortation after it, with some little Enlargements and Alterations of the Collects, it would be a great means to recover the dignity of that excellent Institution, and to form in the minds of youth a greater sense of Religion.

I hope, Sir, by this time I have sufficiently revived those things in your mind which we have so often entertained one another with, and have withal proved what I have undertaken, about the possibility of making some alterations in our Church without damage to it, and of making others to its advantage and honour, its quiet and security. It was easie for me to have been copious upon this Argument, but I have endeavour'd to confine my self, since it is to you I write, who are already so acquainted with these things, as to need no instructor, and withal, because it's a task not very grateful to me. But I must not so leave the Point, for I have yet one Branch remains, which is to shew,

4. General. 4. That this is a fit season for such alterations. The last refuge those that are unwilling to hearken to this Doctrine, betake themselves to, is, that though these alterations are many of them fit to be made, yet this is not a time for it. This was I perceive the mind of some of our Neighbourhood, that are since gone up to sit as Members of your Convocation, who not long before their departure gave me this answer. I confess this their reply much surpriz'd me. *Nor a season*, said I. Is there any thing can make that not to be seasonable, which is alway a duty? Is there any season in which we are not as much as in us lies to seek peace, and ensue it? Was it a season for the Representatives of our Church, and for us with

with them, to declare to all the World, they wanted not a due tenderness toward Dissenters, and were willing to come to such a temper as should be thought fit when the matter should be considered and settled in a Parliament and Convocation? Was it then their Temper and a Season; when they were not in a condition, when the King was against it, and no Parliament or Convention to settle it? And is it not their Temper and a Season when they are in a condition, when the King is for it; and a Parliament and Convocation in being to confirm it? And can we think the Nation has or can forget it, although we don't care to remember or perform it?

Not a Season! Was it a Season to Unite when we had an Enemy ready to devour us? And because he is with-drawn, and for want of an Adversary, shall we devour one another? Are we yet without danger? And if not, have we less reason to fear, when we are divided (as we are now) than when united (as we were then?) Have we begun in the Spirit of Unity and Amity; and are we now made perfect or secure by the Flesh of Contention and Obstinacy? It was observ'd by a Reverend Prelate of this Church, *I take it to be a greater fault in Conformists to be stiff and averse to Union, than in any other sort, inasmuch as the Principles we profess are more truly Catholic than those of any other I know.* But if this be our temper, the Donatists were Catholics to us: for they and their Principles went one way, but here we and our Principles are two.

*Protestant
Peace-maker,
p. 62.*

But, said I, suppose there was never a Dissenter in the Land, have I not known you willing, forward and desirous to have those Alterations made, that (for ought I hear) are like to be propos'd to you? And have you all o'th' sudden lost your Candour, as well as your Integrity? And shall that which was before an Infirmary, be adopted into a State of Perfection? What do you think the Apocrypha able to vie with Canonical Scripture, and the Old Translation of the *Psalms* to be more useful and more exact than the New, and a State of the Church without Discipline, more perfect than what is under the Regiment and influence of it?

Of a sudden I perceived, that one of my Friends gave way; but at length the other interrupted me, and gravely re-